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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Clarification on New Czechoslovakian Internal Security Law

On July 1, 1974 new legislation concerning the organization, jurisdiction and operation of the National Security Corps (SNB) goes into effect. The new law authorizes the SNB to detain persons for up to 24 hours without notifying relatives, enter dwellings without permission, search and seize weapons from "antisocial and other elements", and to use minimum force necessary against offenders. The law also requires higher educational and professional standards for SNB members. Minister of the Interior Obzina has indicated the new law is aimed at "undisciplined people" involved in economic crimes against the state as well as foreign intelligence operations.

While some provisions of the new legislation previously have not appeared in print, such as stipulations for cooperating with security forces of other socialist states, nothing substantive has changed in the mission and techniques of Prague's internal security forces. The SNB will continue to arbitrarily exercise its powers, subject only to party directives.

The probable motivations behind codifying existing practices at this time are to remind potential dissidents that detente does not extend to domestic affairs and that economic crimes will not be tolerated. In addition the new law may represent an effort to improve morale within the ranks of the police.

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